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Pan-Africanism and the Politics of History^{1,2}

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Abstract

Africa is not a country! It is neither a homogenous socio-cultural group nor a unanimous ethno-political sovereign. How then could we speak of Pan-Africanism without generating an ambiguous vernacular mode of identity formation deeply rooted in questionable intellectual claims grounded in politics of history? To make sense of our discourse, therefore, is to localize it within the context of its emergence. These context(s) are the Trans-Atlantic era and colonial historicity with their associative epochs of subjective domination and shared responses of African peoples to this condition. Among other things, colonialism thrived through a denial of historical culture to non-Western people(s) with a false promise of “civilizing” the barbarian – a strategy that evacuates all possibility of human enterprise. In Africa and in the African Diaspora, the “uncivilized” is also a non-historical being of no consequence; an imposed misrecognition that enabled his/her objectification and domination. Pan-Africanism emerged as a restorative agency in this struggle for freedom and dignity by offering a new pose of repudiation grounded in historical unity of the African experience.

Pan-Africanism and the Problems of Defining “Africa”

On the wake of the Haitian earthquake in 2010, the then Senegalese president Abdoulaye Wade implored Africa to offer a home to the Haitians to return to their ancestral origins and restart their lives on the continent. The Haitians are *our* relatives and Senegal would pioneer such resettlement project. At the same time, in South Africa, Blacks from other African countries a.k.a the Makwerekwere³ have become targets of viral xenophobic attacks. In Nigeria, the crises of nation-state cannot be isolated from the persistent crises of national integration. Where the idea of Nigeria fails to establish a congruent national identity, proto-nationalism⁴ takes primacy over any generic sense of national integration. The ongoing civil conflicts in other parts of Africa: the Great Lake regions, Mali, Kenya, the Sudan, are similarly steeped in crises of national belonging. These crises, in large part, mirror the non-homogenous character of Africa’s socio-cultural and geopolitical world. Further evidence against the claim on African unanimity is the subjective reception of Blacks in some parts of northern Africa where a Black person is referred to as an Abeed, i.e., a slave. In Somaliland, Bantu migrant laborers from East Africa were usually treated as slaves. This racialized subjective exclusion becomes even more purposeful in reference to those countries, which regard themselves as “White” Africa, i.e., countries such as Egypt, Mauritania, Libya, Algeria, Tunisia and Northern Sudan. These countries as I have argued elsewhere,

belong to Africa on inducement of political necessity. Socio-culturally, their allegiance lies with the Arab league ... Middle Eastern countries or the Muslim world. Alliance with Sub-Saharan Africa ... is a matter of academic association, without any binding sociopolitical or cultural signification.⁵

The so-called “Arab Spring” for example occurred in Africa, yet it would become a racialized movement that would expunge the very notion of “Africa” in favor of Pan-Arabism.

Such aforementioned contradictions challenge any unanimous conceptualization of Pan-Africanism and stir us to ask the inevitable question: is Pan-Africanism a myth or a reality? How do we reconcile the presupposed pan-Africanist generosity of the likes of the former Senegalese president with the xenophobic attack on the Makwerekweres in South Africa? How do we conciliate the politics of indifference displayed by our North African “brothers” to the “genocide” in the Sudan who despite this indifference yet appeals for a pan-African support for the Palestinians? The complexity of the War in Darfur region notwithstanding, one must acknowledge its associative racism. If we do not share a congruent socio-cultural imaginary, on what socio-political, cultural, or intellectual wavelength, could we speak of pan-Africanism, which is inclusive of the African Diaspora?

This essay is not a pretentious attempt at a history of Pan-Africanism. The essay is merely a modest attempt to historicize its socio-political and cultural emergence and contextual framework through which our discourse gained such profound emotional legitimacy. The suffix “ism” indicates that it is an ideology. Being ideological means that it is responding to a particular issue or crises within an epoch. The emphasis on intellectual context is not only to highlight the present and historical pervasiveness of Pan-Africanism but also to enunciate the diverse and differentiated social history of the movement. In doing so, my objective is not a chronology of events associated with the idea of Pan-Africanism; rather, my intention is to trace the intellectual and socio-cultural context of its emergence; its significance and continued relevance especially when confronted with the politics of history in contemporary Africana historiography.

In the section politics of history, we learn that political independence ushered in a new audience. This autonomy thus achieved would nevertheless need a new ideology. The indentured role of Pan-Africanism is on the political transitoriness and intellectual attraction of its appeal in the formation of contemporary Africana nation-states. In post-colonies, the attempt to mediate a congruent national memory through a reconstruction of a new logic of nationalism through the ashes of the old is defeatist. The discursive self-deception yields to a self-obliteration of the national subjective. On the basis of these continued challenges, the conclusion, for practical purposes, is a modest proposal to locate our discourse within the present socio-cultural and political experiences. In doing so, our discourse ceases to be “frozen” as an ideology and becomes a contemporaneous discourse of the past, the present, and the future; a discourse relevant for all peoples even those outside our Pan-African imaginary.

What is Pan-Africanism?

Pan-Africanism is an amorphous concept. According to Olisanwuche Esedebe,

there is still no agreement on what it is all about. Explanations that some African scholars and politicians give often differ from those suggested by African descendants abroad. Sometimes ... conflicting interpretations [are offered].⁶

For W.E.B Dubois, Pan-Africanism is a socio-cultural phenomenon that emerged for the “industrial and spiritual emancipation” and integral promotion of African cultural values.⁷ In his definition, George Shepperson distinguishes between Pan-Africanism with capital “P”, i.e., as an institutionalized movement such as the Pan-African congresses and its characteristic universal significance and Pan-Africanism with small “p”, i.e., the non recognizable, loosely connected groups dominated by cultural elements. The small “p” movement refers to “all-African movements and trends, which have no organic relationship with the capital “P”

variety.”⁸ Esedebe is yet to offer a more comprehensive definition:

[Pan Africanism is] a political and cultural phenomenon that regards Africa, Africans, and African descendants abroad as a unit. It seeks to regenerate and unify Africa and promote a feeling of oneness among the peoples of the African world. It glorifies the African past and inculcates pride in African values . . . it represented a reaction against the oppression of blacks and the racial doctrines that marked the era of abolitionism.⁹

As to what events constitute this “political and cultural phenomenon”, Esedebe follows Shepperson in arguing that not all anti-colonial events in Africa or African Diaspora constitutes Pan-Africanism: “It is a mistake to suppose that every anti-colonial activity is a manifestation of Pan-Africanism”.¹⁰ Esedebe critiques Alto Kifle Wodjo, John H. Clarke, Ayodele Langley, and others who in their scholarship included historical events such as the 1896 House Tax uprising in Sierra Leone and the Aba Women Riots of 1929 as constitutive of pan-African historical moment. These events according to Esedebe were localized within particular communities with particularly narrow interests, which precludes “global intent” and therefore cannot be considered as a manifestation of Pan-Africanism.¹¹ This is the focus of my disagreement with both Esedebe and Shepperson and I pause awhile to examine the burden of its implication.

Shepperson offers the example of cult leadership rivalry between Marcus Garvey and W.E.B. Dubois as reason for such differentiation between capital “P” and small “p” versions of Pan-Africanism:

It is the very bitterness of this rivalry which makes it difficult to fit Garvey and his followers into the Pan-African movement with a capital letter . . . His overt racialism would suggest that he belongs to a cultural Pan-Africanism.¹²

I disagree. First, I do not think that this dichotomy of capital or small “p” Pan-Africanism is necessarily essential. Secondly, it is more exclusive than inclusive since it admits a binary tendency that borders on elitist versus non-elitist versions of Pan-Africanism. Thirdly, the dualism thus created gravitates towards a reductionist understanding of pan-Africanism for it eschews those particular cultural elements and localized socio-political conditions which first inspired the pan-African consciousness, and for which reason, Pan-Africanism even as a global movement has any justificatory universal significance. The social history of Pan-Africanism indicates that it emerged within a context of a contemporaneous demand for socio-cultural and political emancipation of peoples of African origins whether in the Diaspora or on the African continent. Economic advancement, racial equality, and unconditional recognition of the Black person as an equal citizen of the world were dreams that all Black peoples held in common. But they were dreams that would only become a reality when the oppressed unite under a Pan-African metaphysical unity. Those typical historical moments which Shepperson and Esedebe disqualified as either “non” or “less” Pan-African in character inspired Pan-African consciousness all over the world. Most important are emerging questions of value judgment on the constitutive validity of which historical incidents qualify or do not qualify as Pan-Africanism. What is the definitive yardstick to measure which historical events possess a character of “global intent” or those that do not? Indeed, goods are internal to practices of a community. To make sense of a community’s socio-cultural practice is to localize it within an operational context. The caveat nevertheless is that this does not apply to the doctrine of Pan-Africanism. Pan-Africanism as an ideological quest for unity among people of African origins all over the world is simultaneously a

socio-cultural movement aimed at rescuing the African subjectivity from an imposed misrecognition, abuse, exploitation and domination within history.

As a socio-cultural event, Pan-Africanism is therefore a representative discourse of Black experiences; harmonizing these experiences into an ideological unity in order to undermine the imposed colonial condition and generate a new era of socio-political and economic independence. As an operative discourse, Pan-Africanism is performative as a protest against colonial historicity and its imposed un-redemptive teleology of Black peoples and their experiences. The tax revolt in Sierra Leone or the Aba Women riot or the Haitian revolution were all localized within geopolitical and specific cultural unit, but they were historical events that not only inspired later generations but would also constitute a history we share as peoples of African origin. In fact, when we do speak of rehabilitation of African historical memory or seek for an Africana metaphysical unity, the stories we share are specifically those of Toussaint l'ouverture¹³ in Haiti as they are stories of millions of slaves whose descendants we share the African world. It is the story of Mashaykuma and Ambuya Nehanda¹⁴ in Zimbabwe, Queen Nzinga of Ndongo (Angola), Shaka of Zululand, Ahmadu of Tukulor, Mamadu Lamine, Queen Amina of Zaria, Jaja of Opobo, Ahmed the Mahdi of Sudan, Abdulla Hassen of Somaliland, and Samori Ture; it is the story of Ella Baker, Rosa Parks, Fredrick Douglas, Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King Jr., Bob Moses, Thurgood Marshall, the Scottsboro Boys, and even Barrack Obama; it is the story told for us by Aimé Césaire, Leopold Senghor, Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah, Nelson Mandela, Leon Damas, Langston Hughes, James Baldwin, Steve Biko, Edward Blyden; it is the story of the travails and triumphs of many anonymous African heroes such as the 100,000 victims of the Maji Maji rebellion in East Africa, of Joseph Cinque and other heroes of the AMISTAD; it is the memorialization of the over 100,000 victims of the Herero and Namaqua genocide in Namibia, and of the over two million victims of the first modern Holocaust in King Leopold's Congo, but whose memories have been generally swept under the carpet of history. These stories and historical events that we memorialize as people of African origins share equal constitutive character worthy of pan-African status insofar as they offer a contemporaneous historical memory for Africana peoples. The historical consciousness we inherited is what nourishes our Pan-African imaginary. This is the emotional legitimacy we gain from history, and certainly, our source of metaphysical unity of what we may call our pan-African imaginary – the history we share. For this reason, I do not adopt nor accept the distinction of either Shepperson or Esedebe for it is a characterization of Pan-Africanism that leans towards an “elitist-centered” movement in contrast to grassroot movement, which was the dominant character of Pan-Africanism. For all practical purposes, I am inclined towards Horace Campbell who has advanced a more convincing and holistic distinction in his differentiation between Pan-Africanism from above and Pan-Africanism from below:

Pan Africanism developed from among the slaves who created a vision of the unity of the struggles of the African peoples at home and abroad. It was the totality of the system of oppression which forced the African to create a vision of the world which was larger than the nation or ethnic group from which the slave was captured.¹⁵

Pan-Africanism and the Politics of History

The “colonial encounter” between the Western “other” and the African “savage” mediates a new subjective self-definition of what constitutes a human being.¹⁶ The idea of projecting or imposing “material asymmetricalities” of who is a civilized or one that is a savage offered the

normative guideline to strip the savage other a right or privilege only accessible to the civilized.¹⁷ What this means is that this unknown other can be abused, exploited, or possessed. Since this savage, other has been disqualified from the human race, there is no morality to be accorded to his/her person. Similarly, colonial state and societies sought forms of legitimacy that is consistent with the need to have a visible “other”.¹⁸ Without an “other”, I cannot recognize myself. Colonial discourses therefore found its essence through the invention of the barbarian. This subjective mummification of the other would be couched in modernity. Western modernity in the tradition of the Enlightenment holds that rationality is the bulwark for humanity. And where the colonial subject possesses no rationality, he or she becomes “disqualified” as a human being, mutating into an “object”. As an object, he or she can be possessed or owned (as in slavery), or civilized (to become human) through colonialism. This logic, what may be called the Logic of Coloniality is a condescending narrative that defines the non-Western person from the point of nothingness, a being without history, no past, present or future.¹⁹ The conscious attempt to make the “other” invisible is a form of *denunciation*; what I prefer to call a *denunciatory-enunciator*²⁰; a practice of denying human presence to the other by making him invisible. A thought confirmed by Joseph De Maistre:

There was only too much truth in this first impulse of the Europeans who, in the century of Columbus, refused to recognize as their fellow men the degraded inhabitants of the new world . . . One cannot gaze upon the savage for an instant without reading the anathema written, I do not say upon his soul alone, but even on the external form of his body.²¹

The refusal to recognize is to erase or encase a person’s subjectivity. They *are-not-yet* humans because we find in their culture “repulsive attributes”, that is, those things that inhibit a subjective progression. To denounce one as a non-historical being is to render one invisible – not to be seen. The role of *masking* is to make the *present* invisible, to un-recognize. The idea of cultural atavism; Africa as fixated on an imaginary childhood was already proclaimed by G.W. F. Hegel, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and Baron de Montesquieu.²² For Hegel,

the negro as already observed exhibits the natural man in his . . . wild and untamed state. We must lay aside all thought of reverence and morality . . . there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character. . .²³

Montesquieu affirms:

It is impossible for us to *suppose* these creatures to be men, because, allowing them to be men, a suspicion would follow that we ourselves are not Christians. Weak minds exaggerate too much the wrong done to the Africans.

And from Ernest Renan,²⁴ there is a glimmer of hope because the task of civilization is a religious mandate, ordained by God for superior races to civilize or make human out of those inferior races,

the regeneration of the inferior or degenerate races by the superior races is part of the providential order of things for humanity . . . Nature has made a race of workers, the Chinese race; . . . a race of tillers of the soil, the Negro; . . . a race of masters and soldiers, the European race; . . . Let each one do what he is made for and all will be well . . .²⁵

As Erhard Reckwitz argues, “there can be no identity without difference, just as much as we can only discern difference against a background of identity”.²⁶ Colonial logic emerged out of nothing; it invents a fake undesirable other to recognize itself, but it has no authentic premise but rather a residual premise. Residual is key. Being residual means that the ideal of constructing a different other is the background through which I recognize myself (see endnote 20). Colonial discourse as a residual discourse can be found in Aimé Césaire’s argument that colonialism actually “decivilizes” the colonizer and turns him into a barbarian:

Colonization works to decivilize the colonizer, to brutalize him . . . to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred and moral relativism . . . that colonial activity . . . which is based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it . . . into the habit of seeing the other as an animal, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform himself into an animal.²⁷

The very act of colonial practices degrades the colonialist who remains a residual subject of his own actions. As the saying goes, *the only way you can keep someone in the gutter is to get down there with them*: “a nation that colonizes . . . a civilization which justifies colonization . . . is already a sick civilization, a civilization that is morally diseased”.²⁸ In a typical fashion, what Césaire means is that *I have to be a barbarian to treat others in a barbaric fashion*, a process that dehumanizes both master and subject into an object, “colonization=thingification”.²⁹

Within the Negro’s context, the mask othering was perpetuated through the symbolism of White is good vs. Black is evil. Blackness is a quality ascribed to the irrational as Kant seems to teach us in reference to a Black person, “This man was black from head to toe, a clear proof that what he said was stupid”.³⁰ Notice however, the intuitive link between color versus rationality/humanity. The Enlightenment humanism holds that rationality=humanity; yet, the Negro because of his color remains irrational, and therefore, he must be non-human as we learn from Kant: “So fundamental is the difference between these two races of man, and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in colour”.³¹ Being Black presupposes an inferior other as Hume tells us,

I am apt to suspect the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the Whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion, nor even any individual, eminent either in action or speculation.³²

In contemporary German registers, we find peculiar similarities: Schwarze magie (black magic); Schwarzarbeit (moonlighting); Schwarzfahren (travel without a ticket); Schwarzer Peter (one with bad luck). Bloke Modisane compares with the South African experience:

White is right, and to be black is to be despised, dehumanized, classed among the beasts, hounded and persecuted, discriminated against, segregated and oppressed by government and by man’s greed. White is the positive standard, black the negative. Symbols of wealth . . . are allotted to the whites; . . . inferiority, humiliation and servitude are the lot of the black people.³³

Pan-Africanism emerged as a revolt to colonial historicity and at the same time offered a homogenous historical consciousness that nurtured anti-colonial struggles. Pan-Africanism ushered in an idea of African unity where none existed before. The new independent states were mere colonial territories without any sense of a shared imaginary. Yet, political autonomy demands ideology. Pan-Africanism ushered a shared imagination of political solidarity, stability, and meaning out of the artificially created colonial territories. It offered a new sense of national identity harnessed from the socio-historical and political consciousness of the African peoples

in contrast to the colonial regime and its imposed identity. This is the key: *an ideological framework to bring about a sense of national belonging in a culturally differentiated society. The inference that so and so territory belongs to me is a subjective announcement, that I am present, I belong here.*

As Hans Kohn argued, however, the constitutive character of nationalism is often measured by “common descent, language, territory, political entity, customs, traditions, and religion”.³⁴ The caveat following Kohn’s interpretation is that none of these elements is a sufficient universal attribute of nationalism: (i) Common descent – modern nationalities are characterized by many different races and miscegenation such as in countries like USA, South Africa, or Netherlands. (ii) Language – despite the stress on language by Herder and Fichte, many nationalities do not have an own language. (iii) Customs and traditions owe its root to Rousseau who stressed the importance of both in the making of a nationality. Besides customs and traditions are non-static, they change and remain dynamic. (iv) Religion was a significant factor in primitive and medieval nationalities where religious civilization became conceptual frameworks to articulate national identities. (v) A shared common territory without an integrated citizenry or solid national core falters into anarchy.³⁵

In Africa, however, the colonial societies were more heterogeneous than homogenous; they were very differentiated in all manner of socio-political, cultural, or religious experiences. It is no wonder that this idea of what it means to be a “nation” has to be signified from outside the “borders”, determined by fatality of historical circumstances dating back to 1885. African countries on the eve of independence were neither democratically self-determined nor did they represent a coherent group that willed to live together on the virtue of any congruent national memory. In fact, these countries were merely a collection of people, groups, or ethnicities without any binding socio-political contemporaneity. It is in an attempt to deal with these obvious problems that African elites appealed to the ideals of Pan-Africanism to find different ways of transforming the inherited colonial states into an integrated “Africanized” national territory. Among the many methods adopted for this purpose included the change in colonial era national names, Marxism, single-party system, unitary system of governments, military dictatorships, cult demagogues, politicization of history among others.

My focus on politics of history and cult demagogues for the current purposes is that they remain the most representative of this post-colonial condition. Where a shared historical capital became a highly perfidious instrument for national integration, it also constitutes a major criticism of Pan-Africanism. First, the “history” in question is history from above and not self-determined. Secondly, the idea of nationalism emerging from such history is a given from above and therefore possesses all credentials of colonial statecraft. And finally, if the colonial state was sustained by force and coercion to belong to a certain territory, the post-colonial state would have to fall back on some kind of history for a sense of nationalism, and because the emerging sense of national identity is residual, this new sense of nationalism would also offer loopholes for domination through the politicization of history.

In the post-colonial, the absence of a congruent national memory means that political legitimization would have to be found through the politicization of history and cult of personalities. Cult personalities are those national elites whose role in the early formation of the republic has turned them into cryptic symbols of national memories. As heroes of the new republic, their symbolism is also mummified into national subjective. Ideally, in cult nationalism, the following scenario is obtainable:

[The] country’s sociopolitical imaginary is rigidly fixed on the aura of the sacred ‘father’ of the independence struggle, the demagogue who has become an embodiment of the ‘nation’ itself . . . the subjectivity of the nation is inherently tied with that of the demagogue who sees himself as the savior. Thus, Mugabe says I am Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe is me: ‘So Tony Blair, keep your

England and let me keep my Zimbabwe' . . . And, in his 2008 presidential election, Mugabe would still appeal to independence struggle as legitimization for his continual stay in power . . . : 'vote comrade Robert Mugabe! In 1980 we did it, so let's do it again'.³⁶

This is the extent in which Pan-Africanism has remained powerless in the face of "internal" domination. In some cases, it has even offered impetus for dictatorship by the elites who acquired power only to become tyrants.³⁷ The problem with cult personality however is that where national identity is tied to the cult demagogue, the cult character remains a false consciousness for national integration. History remains instructive on such consequences that emerged when a cult character is conflated with the national imaginary. In those republics that got a sense of national identity through cult dictatorship, the emergence of a vacuum in the center evacuates any ideal of national cohesion. In most instances, a vacuum in the center also generates civil strife as we learn from countries like Yugoslavia after (Tito's death), or in Africa; Zaire (after Mobutu Sese Seko), Côte d'Ivoire (after Félix Houphouët-Boigny) among others.³⁸

If the character of every nation-state were a shared historical memory, in this post-colonial condition, history would have to be invented or revisited to conjure an image of national imaginary through a politicization of history. History offers a source of legitimacy as well as authoritative national will, i.e., will to be. And where such common history does not exist, it will be found in myths, legends, or even invented where necessary. This was the preoccupation of Africana elites who tried reconstructing indigenous African philosophical traditions. They hoped to affect transference of knowledge in which Africana historical traditions would give legitimacy to the states they inherited. Examples of such intellectual traditions were ujamaa, consciencism, humanism, communautarisme, authenticité, ubuntu, etc. Some of these traditions became successful as cultural-converters that enabled cohesion in the post-independent African states, while a few of these traditions became even more destructive as agents of political domination. But such appeal to history as a location of meaning and self-determination is not peculiar to Africa. And even so, being invented or mythical does not deny the said tradition of subjective legitimacy.³⁹ In Germany, the humanists appealed to Tacitus' Germania and its glorification of classical German virtues. The rediscovery of the Germania encouraged the humanists to evolve a new idea of self-understanding, a new spirit that contributed in the making of modern Germany.⁴⁰ In a similar historical parallel, in an attempt to lay claim to an imperial universal order, the kings of Franks assumed the legend of being the legitimate and true successors of Charlemagne through direct blood descent.⁴¹ In this politicization of history, a new national sovereign tries to find meaning and national will in history.

Conclusion

A possible criticism of Pan-Africanism is that it is anachronistic to contemporary issues affecting Africa. An idyllic historical movement, permanently "frozen" in the moment of "refusal" or "revolt" to colonial historicity is said to be irrelevant today. Besides, even the inherited ideal of subjective revival is bedeviled with internal contradiction; it is a product of history by analogy, history invented at the gaze of the other. The problem with Historical analogy is that it is conditioned upon redemptive teleology. And if Pan-Africanism is a product of history by analogy, it would be criticized for lacking subjective authenticity insofar as it gains normative essence through subjective revolt. *Subjective revolt* is the very process of displacing colonial historicity by way of reverse discourses. The emerging problematic is that the pan-Africanist has become a product of the other, i.e., the colonialist; he/she is being invented at the gaze of the colonialist, a thing. Responding to the colonialist in his own terms constitute a validation of colonial racist discourses. It is the colonialist who has determined the very point of intellectual engagement.⁴²

Another criticism of Pan-Africanism is how to reconcile the internal contradictions emerging from some African-Americans pioneers of Pan-Africanism such as James Africanus

Horton, Edward Blyden, and Paul Cuffe who thought of Africa as “heathenish darkness and barbarity” with out contemporary idealized notion of Pan-Africanism.⁴³ These pioneers of Pan-Africanism advocated for colonialism as a necessary evil for the redemption of Africa from its primitive and barbaric cultures. Yet at the same time, we see a movement advancing the cultural rehabilitation of Africans as “equals” to other beings in the world. The cultural rehabilitation becoming necessary since it was the pretext of cultural inferiority and consequent need for “civilization” that the Black person was objectified as an object of enslavement and colonialism. The transition from object to subject would necessarily be accompanied with a rehabilitation of culture, but it is also a culture which is also criticized as “heathenish and backwards”, a culture that needs to be “civilized”.

To recapitulate, the idea of Pan-Africanism in its wake inspired the following outcomes: (i) an idea of a shared African historical consciousness, (ii) intellectual revolt to colonialism and its exploitative ideology, (iii) a sense of socio-political identity different from given impressions of colonialism but grounded in Africa’s historical past, (iv) a sense of subjective autonomy culminating in socio-political independence, (v) a vision of history that is typically African in premise, content, context, and conclusion, (vi) a metaphysical sense of unity for all peoples of African origins as inspired by a shared historical memory. To what extent could we measure these outcomes as successful? The image spewing out of Western media on Africa is predominantly negative. It is a view that is packaged as the ultimate truth and people absorb it as absolute reality. Such stereotypes have become dominant in Western imagination and sometimes even accepted as a “scientific” truth.⁴⁴ Walter Rodney at the 6th Pan-African congress spoke of Pan-Africanism as an exercise in self-definition, by which he means the very act of redefining people of African origins in ways that do not de-minoritize them; in ways in which they are simply not “just” the other, that is, an inferior other whose overall life narratives are of no consequence.⁴⁵ Western indifference to the crises in Burundi and Rwanda for example which paled in comparison to similar crises in Western nations like the Bosnian crises is a poignant point for such self-reflection.⁴⁶

Pan-Africanism is focused on psychosocial emancipation of Blacks. The shared goal was to challenge the socio-cultural domination of the oppressors by being conscious of one’s subjectivity. It emerged as a model of resistance to counteract the image of the dominating ego of the Western imperial “other” and to reassert the Black person’s psychosocial dignity by way of appeal to a simulated celebration of African history, a Black homeland; a means of liberating the mind from those barriers that inhibits its struggle for freedom by first tackling the problem at its intellectual roots. It is to free the mind and reconstitute the subject abused and denigrated by colonialism. Pan-Africanism united different socio-cultural ethnos into a homogenous revolutionary consciousness. This illustrates the long-term achievement of pan-Africanism through a mobilization of a single historical consciousness that nurtured anti-colonial struggles to fruition.

That is all!

Short Biography

Michael Onyebuchi Eze PhD is a research associate at the Martin Luther King Jr., Research and Education Institute and a visiting scholar at the Center for African Studies, both at Stanford University. He got his BA (honors) degree in philosophy and classics from Arrupe Jesuit School of philosophy in Harare, Zimbabwe. He obtained an MA in African philosophy from the University of Pretoria, South Africa. Eze became a Stiftung Mercator Foundation Research Fellow at the Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut (Institute for Advanced Study in Humanities) in Essen, Germany from 2006–2009. He received his doctorate (summa cum laude) in Intellectual History from the Universität Witten-Herdecke, Germany. He is the author of many scientific

articles such as the Politics of being a human being in Soweto; What is African communitarianism? Humanism as history in Contemporary Africa, as well as two books *The Politics of History in Contemporary Africa* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) and *Intellectual History in Contemporary South Africa* both (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). He is currently working on two new projects *A Companion to African Intellectual History* and a monograph on Islam, Nationalism and Survival Politics in Contemporary Nigeria.

Notes

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¹ I thank the two anonymous reviewers whose suggestions and critical insights not only inspired but also made me completely embarrassed by the earlier draft of this paper. Thank you! Siyabonga! Tatenda! Ndewo!

² I dedicate this essay to the third anniversary memory of Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem.

³ The Makwerekwere is the alien non-South African Black whose foreign accent or language determines his access to the socio-economic and political world within South Africa. Difference in language becomes a point of subjective exclusion. A residue of South Africa colonial history of racist capitalism, the Makwerekwere as an alien pressures competition for access to socio-economic world. The Makwerekwere is a threat insofar as any threat to socio-economic resource constitutes a threat to human subjectivity. See Eze, *Intellectual History*, 98–99; Eze, “The Politics of Being a Human Being in Soweto” 299–313.

⁴ The idea that one’s primary patriotic allegiance is to the ethno-cultural or tribal ancestry over and above any idea of national identity; that is, the primacy of ethno-patriotism over national identity.

⁵ Eze, *The Politics of History in Contemporary Africa*, 3.

⁶ Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism*, 30.

⁷ Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism*, 30.

⁸ Shepperson, ‘Ethiopianism’, 346.

⁹ Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism*, 5,8.

¹⁰ Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism*, 6.

¹¹ Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism*, 5–6.

¹² Shepperson, ‘Ethiopianism’, 346.

¹³ Arguably the founding father of Haiti who led the revolution at San Domingo.

¹⁴ This great mother of Africa inspired Mashaykuma in the first Chimurenga (revolutionary war) against British South Africa Company. In fact, the Africans defeated the British at the initial stages of the revolt, for which reason mama Nehanda earned the title “witch” because of her strategic war genius that piqued the British aggressors. Typical of colonial discourse, by calling her a “witch”, she has been “disqualified” as a normal human being who would ordinarily possess such military ingenuity.

¹⁵ Campbell, ‘Pan-Africanism in the Twenty-First Century’, 212. Unlike Shepperson or Esedebe, Campbell is not making a value judgment as to which “version” of Pan-Africanism is more authentic, legitimate, or more pan-African. The distinction Campbell makes rests on the need to recognize localized Pan-African political struggles. Although there is a binary tension as to what constitutes “above” and “below”, the main point however is that the intentionalities are of equal value; none of the version of Pan-Africanism is more significant or important or more or less pan-African as Shepperson and Esedebe tend to argue. In fact, Campbell tends to give an “initiative” credit to Pan-Africanism from below in his recognition of many roles that African slaves played in generating a pan-African spirit of rebellion. Horace’s distinction is also closely related to Ali Mazrui’s characterization between Pan-Africanism of liberation and Pan-Africanism of integration. Pan-Africanism of liberation is one concerned with revolt and rupture of colonial historicity and its consequent dehumanization of black people. Pan-Africanism of integration is concerned with alliance in terms of free trade, economic union, or a homogenous socio-political unit. Mazrui ‘Pan-Africanism’, 35.

¹⁶ See Reckwitz, “Otherness?”, p277.

¹⁷ Among the disorientating psychosocial conditions of colonialism was the act of objectifying non-White Europeans. When one is perceived as a “material” or “object”, he or she loses humanity and become perceived as a “thing”. See Reckwitz, “Otherness?”, 277–230; Eze, *The Politics of History*, 31–51.

¹⁸ Reckwitz “Otherness” 277–230; Eze, *The Politics of History*, 31–51.

¹⁹ see Eze, *Politics of History* 45–46.

²⁰ I denounce you to recognize myself. *I am because you are NOT!* This is the sense in which colonial discourse is an “empty” concept. It is empty insofar as it depends on denouncing the other to recognize itself or acquire validation.

To denounce is to enforce an invisible shield where one's subjectivity is conditioned in the absence of any threat of competing subjectivities, akin to a last-man-standing complex. To recognize an other as an equal human being lures the colonialist into self-obliteration for any such recognition undermines the very essence of colonial logic.

²¹ Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 49.

²² Hegel, G. W. F., Baron de Montesquieu, and Immanuel Kant were the beloved sons of the Enlightenment that championed liberty as embodied in historical culture and rationally. Human dignity they argue is an unconditional quality for "every" human race with the exception of non-White peoples.

²³ Eze, *Race and the Enlightenment*, 35.

²⁴ A French theorist of nationhood known for his essay *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* "What is a Nation?" (1882).

²⁵ Césaire, *Discourse*, 38.

²⁶ see Reckwitz "Otherness"; 246.

²⁷ Césaire, *Discourse*, 35.

²⁸ Césaire, *Discourse*, 39.

²⁹ Césaire, *Discourse*, 42.

³⁰ Eze, *African Philosophy*, 7.

³¹ Kant, *Observations*, 110–111.

³² Hume, 'Of National Character' 228.

³³ Modisane, 'Why I Ran Away', 26.

³⁴ For an excellent and detailed discussion on the shortcomings of this traditional markers of nationhood, see Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*, 14–16.

³⁵ Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*, 14–16.

³⁶ Eze, *Politics of History*, 166–167.

³⁷ See Eze, *Politics of History*, 157–180; also, Campbell, 'Pan Africanism in the Twenty-First Century' 216.

³⁸ See Eze, *Politics of History*, 157–180.

³⁹ Myth is not necessarily untrue; it is used to move the mind of the community where it functions as a "historical address". see Eze, *Intellectual History*, 107–109.

⁴⁰ see Eze, *Intellectual History*, 158–160.

⁴¹ Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*, 141.

⁴² Eze, *Intellectual History*, 182–192.

⁴³ see Ezedibe, *Pan-Africanism*, 9; Eze, *The Politics of History*, 22–25.

⁴⁴ Consider the case of the Nobel laureate Professor James Watson in 2007 and his "scientific" racist proof that Africans are not as intelligent when compared to white people.

⁴⁵ Rodney, 'Towards the Sixth Pan African Congress', 729.

⁴⁶ The Islamic terrorist attack at St. John's Catholic Church in Bauchi State, Nigeria occurred on September 23, 2012, the same day of the Emmy award in the USA. Although many lives were lost, there was no mention of this incident in any press in the United States as the glamour effect of the Emmy overshadowed everything else. This reflects continued Western attitude towards Africa as a continent of no consequence. African lives do not worth as much as Western lives.

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